

AGENDA: September 24, 2002

5.1

CATEGORY: Public Hearing

DEPT.: Community Development

TITLE: Resolution Amending Height Limit in
Area H of the Downtown Precise Plan

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt A RESOLUTION AMENDING THE DOWNTOWN PRECISE PLAN TO CLARIFY THE HEIGHT LIMIT FOR AREA H (HISTORIC RETAIL AREA).

FISCAL IMPACT—None.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

Several recent items have indicated the need to clarify the Downtown Precise Plan height limit, including the conceptual design for a new parking garage at the corner of California and Bryant Streets, and consideration of floor heights for different uses and how they affect overall building height. Due to the pending design and construction of the California Street/Bryant Street parking garage and retail building, it was felt that the height limit for Area H should be clarified now. The broader Precise Plan update for all of the Castro Street areas will be examining the development standards for the downtown commercial areas, so potential changes, if any, to the fundamental building height development standards would be considered in that context.

The current Precise Plan height limit for the Historic Retail Area (Area H) of the Precise Plan simply states: "Maximum height of three stories throughout Area H." The Precise Plan does not define a "story" and does not specify a height limit in terms of number of feet. As City staff has reviewed potential designs for the parking garage, the question arose about whether above-grade parking levels would be considered to be "stories" within the terms of the Precise Plan and, if not, what height limit would apply? In addition, the new commercial developments occurring in the downtown have a variety of heights of the individual floors, resulting in a variety of actual building heights, even with otherwise similar "three-story" buildings. Office and retail buildings in other parts of the City have shown even greater variation in the heights of stories from floor to ceiling.

On August 7, 2002, the Environmental Planning Commission considered an amendment to the Downtown Precise Plan to clarify the height limit for Area H. The proposed amendment contained two key features: (1) setting a height limit in feet as well as stories, and (2) clarifying that parking levels are not considered to be stories. The Commission unani-

mously recommended the proposed amendment with one wording change to make it clear that the parking levels would be covered by the height limit in feet. The recommended wording (**bold** type indicates new wording) to replace the height limit wording on Page 69 of the Precise Plan is:

"2. Height

Minimum height is twenty-five (25) feet for all properties fronting Castro Street. Maximum height of three (3) stories **and fifty-five (55) feet** throughout Area H.

- a. **Parking structure levels shall not count as a story, but the overall building shall be limited by the fifty-five (55) foot height limit.**
- b. **Decorative roof treatments and architectural features may be permitted to exceed the fifty-five (55) foot height limit upon design approval specified in the Administration Section.**
- c. The first floor must be designed to have a minimum ceiling height of ten (10) feet in order to accommodate retail, and the first floor must be no more than one (1) foot above sidewalk level."

All of the recent three-story buildings within Area H comply with this revised standard, and the conceptual design for the parking garage also complies. Any further clarifications or adjustments to the height limits within the Precise Plan can be incorporated as part of the broader review of land use and design standards in the update of the rest of the Downtown Precise Plan now under way.

This item has been determined to be categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Class 5, minor alterations in land use limitations which do not result in any changes in land use or intensity.

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PUBLIC NOTICING

Agenda posting and mailed notice to all property owners within Area H or within a 300' radius around Area H, plus a separate request to the owners/developers of new residential projects within the noticed area to forward the notice to any new purchasers of units. Notice was also sent to the members of the Downtown Committee.

Prepared by:

Approved by:

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City Manager

MJP/5/CAM
812-09-24-02M-E^

- Attachment: 1. A Resolution Amending the Downtown Precise Plan to Clarify The Height Limit For Area H (Historic Retail Area)
2. EPC Minutes dated August 7, 2002